

## FILM CLIPS NEWS FROM THE MONTANA FILM OFFICE

# Room to roam: Unpacking “Suitcase Heart”

By Nikolas Griffith  
Montana Film Office

With molten glass, open flame, and a neon cowgirl or two, the Montana-shot music video for singer/songwriter Jesse Macht’s video, “Suitcase Heart” sounds like it could be set in an east-LA warehouse instead of Montana’s Paradise Valley. But with the help of Montana photographer Audrey Hall, Macht took the stark beauty of early spring and crafted it into a tale of self-discovery and a truly gorgeous video.



Singer/songwriter Jesse Macht (Photo by Audrey Hall)

mits he was surprised that both of Hall’s friends who joined them were full-time sculptors, “I started laughing with them because of how amazing it is to be in that landscape and be inspired.”

For Hall, choosing to make her career in Montana isn’t a surprise at all. As a photographer and artist, she values the large, open spaces that Montana offers. “Montana’s greatest attribute is that it gives me the space to work creatively,” she explains, speaking to her ability to go for long drives or immerse herself in a state without the constant bombardment of information from the outside

world.

With a client list and jobs that take her all over the world, Hall admits that basing in Montana is still the best choice, “If I’m getting on a plane or if I’m getting in a car, what a great place to start or come back to.”

In connecting with other local artists, like Magaro, both Macht and Hall admit that there is a strong sense of artistic community that exists in the state. The support between peers, regardless of their artistic medium, makes creating and expanding their own art both easy and exciting.

“Just to be making music and be inspired by other artists who are inspired by my music is one of my top goals,” he said. “So to be around Ona and what she was doing with glass blowing, representing her art, and with Audrey shooting her way, that was pretty special.”

Hall agreed, explaining that even as she travels she works to keep in contact with other Montana artists and to follow their successes around the globe. Whether it’s photography, filmmaking, music, or any other artistic media, she admits that, “There is a lot happening now with creative people who have a connection with this state ... It’s like we’re in a Montana Renaissance.”

### Giving space

While projects coming to the valley typically look to take advantage of the verdant seas of grass and blue skies filled with summer sun, Macht and Hall leveraged the jagged peaks of the Crazy Mountains against a steely grey sky as a place of space and discovery.

“I felt like that space would help translate that story of giving yourself the space to figure out what you need,” Macht said, “It just seemed to mirror art equals function, equals design. I felt all the elements were a sort of metaphor of giving yourself space and living in the beauty of that space.”

“I wanted to parallel Jesse’s lyrics rather than illustrate them,” added Hall.

Shooting on the back roads of the Crazies, Hall used the miles of unhurried dirt roads to give an extra emphasis to the cadence of the studio track they had recorded earlier. “[A road trip] is a natural thing you’d do here,” she explained.

Working to recall Macht’s LA-roots, she sought to recreate a “fish out of water” scenario to keep the focus on the need for space and reflection Macht had written into the lyrics.

Later in the shoot the team paired with Montana glass artist Ona Magaro to create a

muse-like character who brought literal fire to the shoot. Done in Magaro’s Livingston glass studio, Hall wanted those scenes to add to the story and depict the “courage it takes to put yourself out there artistically.”

While originally set up to include a number of other artists from the Paradise area, the end product with just Magaro added the right flavor to the shoot. The scenes were set to balance the scenic shots with a gritty surrealism and an enigmatic relationship.

“I think they’re maybe a little more critical thinking, a little higher level for an audience,” Macht explained, “It’s a song about our own journeys and our own expectations.”

### A creative mecca

“Suitcase Heart” is Macht’s first video in Montana but not his first time here. “Creatively Paradise Valley has become a mecca of sorts for me,” he said. “It’s a chance for me to slow down and contemplate, which turns into artistic vision and goals.”

Boasting a strong art community in addition to its beauty, the Livingston area has been home to a number of artists including Al Feldstein, Jim Harrison and Russell Chatham (in addition to Hall and her peers). In recalling a recent post-shoot kayaking trip, Macht ad-

## STRATEGIC INVESTMENT GRANTS

### Charley Shipley: “I am so glad I have the tools to prepare”

In 2013, Helena artist Charley Shipley (charleyshipley.com) received a \$1,000 Strategic Investment Grant to help him attend the 2014 Western Masters Art Show and Sale in Great Falls. Here’s what he has to say about how the grant and the Montana Arts Council have helped him launch his career:

A few years ago I decided if I was ever going to do something with my art I better get started. The kids were out of the house, (mostly then, but not anymore), and we had a steady income. I thought my art was good enough to sell.

I didn’t know where to start. I figured you sold art at a gallery, but the thought of cold

calling on random galleries made me ill. No one at work knew I painted, and I didn’t tell them.

But as time went on and I kept painting I started to share with others that this is what I always wanted to do. A good friend of mine at work marveled that I could paint but was doing nothing with it. She knew about the Montana Arts Council and the Montana Artrepreneur Program (MAP).

I signed up and went through the program. It gave me what I needed to promote myself and my art. With help from MAC, I have taken a couple workshops that helped tremendously and participated in several shows.

I now show my work in several galleries and applied to the Western Masters Art Show and Sale in Great Falls last summer. I, along with a sculptor friend, was accepted and we shared a room at the Heritage Inn in March. I also showed my work at the Wild Sheep Foundation Convention, Jan. 22-25 in Reno, NV.

It’s amazing how many things need to be done in order to professionally show your work. I am so glad I have the tools to prepare.

It would have taken me years of trial and error on my own to learn what I did from Cindy Kittredge (MAC’s Market Development Specialist) and the Montana Arts Council.

### George’s House of Clay goes to Japan (with help from Hatchfund)

Helena artist George Metropoulos McCauley is a Strategic Investment Grant awardee who will be returning to Kumamoto, Japan, in October to work with friend and fellow potter Koichi Yamamoto. McCauley will also have an exhibition at the Shimada Museum in Kumamoto in tandem with David Hiltner of the Red Lodge Clay Center.

In order to fund the travel portion of his trip, McCauley worked with Hatchfund, an organization that helps artists present their projects and raise funds via www.hatchfund.org.

McCauley, who titled his project “George’s House of Clay Goes to Japan” reports: “I was assigned a program officer who helped



George McCauley and his dog Skippy fire an anagama kiln in Missoula.  
(Photo by Steve Saroff/Saroff Photography)

me through the set-up, communicating via email and phone calls as well. Yes, Hatchfund believes in the personal touch!”

“At each step of the application my program officer, Erin Cooper, went over my submissions and offered advice – her input was very helpful. At one point I had a problem uploading some information and she just had me email it to her

and did it for me. Any time I needed help she was there for advice and since the office sees your application in progress Hatchfund was

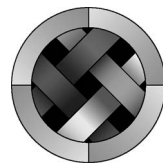
usually there with help before I knew I needed help!”

“After a review they say ‘we are going to launch’ and wammo, your project is live. Each applicant is responsible to promote the project and Hatchfund is there with guidance as well. I suggest that anyone who needs to raise funds for a project look into this fine and helpful organization.”

McCauley, a Greek/American potter, has had 23 solo shows and has been included in 186 exhibitions. He has taught and conducted workshops internationally, and is the recipient of three National Endowment for the Arts grants and the prestigious Roy Acuff Chair of Excellence for the Arts at Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, TN.

He’s made two films: “Archie C. Bray Jr.: Life at the Brickyard,” which he completed in 2008; and a film on ceramic artist Ron Meyers, completed in 2013. He has also participated in workshops and exhibitions in China, Estonia and Japan.

For more on his Hatchfund project, go to www.hatchfund.org and search for the artist.



21

### Groovetrail helps connect musicians and audiences

Groovetrail, a new nonprofit organization in the Flathead Valley, aims to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to experience the happiness that music creates by bringing its gift to those who need it most.

Multi-instrumentalist and Groovetrail founder Erica von Kleist moved to the Flathead Valley from New York in 2012 hoping for some clean air, clarity, and space to write new music and start anew. Humbled by the outpouring of love and support from the music community, and having worked for several outreach-based organizations in New York, including Jazz at Lincoln Center and Feel the Music, she created Groovetrail as a way to connect musicians with those who need their services the most.

The new organization plans to provide:

- Private lesson sponsorships for needy students;
- Outreach concerts at local hospitals, veteran’s homes, schools, retirement communities, and shelters;
- Musical instruments for deserving and low-income students and musicians;
- Opportunities for special guest artists visiting the Flathead Valley to get involved in community outreach activities.

For more information, visit groovetrail.org or call 406-250-2233.